



Natural Environment Board

Date: **THURSDAY, 29 JANUARY 2026**

Time: 11.00 am – or at the rising of the West Ham Park Committee, whichever is later

Venue: **COMMITTEE ROOMS - 2ND FLOOR WEST WING, GUILDHALL**

Members:	James St John Davis (Chair) Charles Edward Lord, OBE JP (Deputy Chair) Deputy Anne Corbett Deputy Caroline Haines Alderman Gregory Jones KC (Ex- Officio Member) Wendy Mead OBE Deputy Benjamin Murphy	William Upton KC Heather Barrett-Mold Vladislav Dobrokhotov Tony Leach Dani Stephenson John Beyer (Observer) Catherine Bickmore (Observer) Verderer Paul Morris (Observer)
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Enquiries: **Zoe Williams**
Zoe.Williams@cityoflondon.gov.uk

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Ian Thomas CBE
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

AGENDA

NB: Certain matters for information have been marked * and will be taken without discussion, unless the Committee Clerk has been informed that a Member has questions or comments prior to the start of the meeting. These information items have been collated in a supplementary agenda pack and circulated separately.

Part 1 - Public Agenda

1. **APOLOGIES**
2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**
3. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE**
Report of the Town Clerk.
For Decision
(Pages 5 - 8)
4. **CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY UPDATE**
Officers of the Environment Department to present a verbal update.
For Information
(Verbal Report)
5. **Open Spaces**
***RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE (SUMMARY)**
Report of Executive Director, Environment.
For Information
6. **ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT HIGH-LEVEL BUSINESS PLAN 2026-30**
Report of Executive Director, Environment.
For Decision
(Pages 9 - 28)
7. ***KING GEORGE'S FIELD CHARITY - ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025**
Report of the Chamberlain and Executive Director, Environment.
For Information

City Gardens

8. CITY GARDENS UPDATE

Officers of the Environment Department to provide a verbal update.

For Information
(Verbal Report)

9. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

Part 2 - Non-Public Agenda

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

MOTION: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

For Decision

12. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CHARITIES COMPLEMENTARY LAND USE ASSESSMENT

Report of Executive Director, Environment.

For Discussion
(Pages 29 - 184)

13. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

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City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Natural Environment Board – For Decision	Dated: 29 January 2025
Subject: Annual Review of Terms of Reference	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: • provides statutory duties • provides business enabling functions	N/A
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Town Clerk
Report author:	Zoe Williams, Governance Officer

Summary

As part of the implementation of the 2021 Governance Review, it was agreed that the cycle and process of annually reviewing the Terms of Reference of all Committees/Boards should be revised, to provide more time for Committees to consider and discuss changes before they are submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee. This is to enable any proposed changes to be considered in time for the annual reappointment of Committees by the Court of Common Council.

Members should note that a broader review of the Natural Environment Committees' Terms of Reference is scheduled to take place as part of the Natural Environment Charities Review. Any resulting amendments to the Terms of Reference would subsequently require consideration by the Policy & Resources Committee and the Court of Common Council. It is therefore recommended that any substantive changes be progressed through this review process.

The terms of reference of the Natural Environment Board are attached as an appendix to this report for Members' consideration.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Agree that the terms of reference of the Natural Environment Board, subject to any comments, be approved for submission to the Court of Common Council in April 2026, and that any further changes required in the lead up to the Court's appointment of Committees be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

Zoe Williams

Governance Officer
Town Clerk's Department
E: Zoe.Williams@cityoflondon.gov.uk

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BOARD

1. **Constitution**

A Non-Ward Committee consisting of,

- eight Members elected by the Court of Common Council, at least one of whom shall have fewer than five years' service on the Court at the time of their appointment
- the following ex-officio Members:-
 - the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee
 - the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee
- up to four external non-voting representatives, appointed by the Natural Environment Board with appropriate expertise in the Natural Environment, including biodiversity & nature resilience, community engagement, access & recreation, culture, heritage & learning and income generation.
- up to one observer nominated by the Epping Forest & Commons Committee, Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee and West Ham Park.

2. **Quorum**

The quorum consists of any five Members.

3. **Membership 2025/26**

4	(4)	Benjamin Daniel Murphy, Deputy
2	(2)	Anne Corbett, Deputy <i>for two years</i>
8	(3)	Caroline Wilma Haines, Deputy
15	(3)	Wendy Mead, OBE
3	(2)	James St John Davis
<i>Vacancy</i>		
<i>Vacancy</i>		
<i>Vacancy</i>		

together with the ex-officio Members referred to in paragraph 1 above..

3. **Terms of Reference**

To be responsible for:-

- (a) the approval, monitoring, and regular review of the Natural Environment Board strategies overseeing the overall policy and performance framework for the Natural Environment Division of the Environment Department (where such matters are not the responsibility of another committee) and the City Gardens team which sit within the City Operations Division of the Environment Department.
- (b) overseeing the delivery of the Natural Environment Board's strategies (where such matters are not specifically the responsibility of another committee).
- (c) dealing with and making recommendations to the Court of Common Council where appropriate, all matters relating to the strategic management of the City of London Corporation's natural environment (where such matters are not specifically the responsibility of another committee).
- (d) the allocation of Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment Programme grants and the allocation of non-site specific grants related to the Natural Environment Board.
- (e) the management and day-to-day administration of the gardens, churchyards and open spaces in the City under the control of the Common Council, together with Bunhill Fields Burial Ground;
- (f) arrangements for the planting and maintenance of trees and other plants and shrubs in open spaces and in footpaths adjacent to highways in the City;
- (g) advising on applications for planning permission relating in whole or in part to the gardens, churchyards or open spaces in the City under the control of the Common Council; and
- (h) the functions of the Common Council under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to make safe by felling, or otherwise, dangerous trees in the City generally on receipt of notices served on the City of London Corporation in the circumstances set out in Section 23 of the Act and where trees are in danger of damaging property.

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City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Natural Environment Board	Dated: 29/1/2026
Subject: Environment Department high-level Business Plan 2026-30	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business enabling functions 	Corporate Plan Outcomes: Diverse engaged communities; Vibrant thriving destination; Providing excellent services; Flourishing public spaces; Leading sustainable environment Business enabling functions: Business Planning; Resource allocation and management; Risk Management; Health and Safety; EEDI.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment
Report author:	Joanne Hill, Environment Department

Summary

This report presents for approval the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2026-30. The Business Plan sets out the Department's priority workstreams for 2026-30 along with the specific actions and targets which will be undertaken in 2026/27 to deliver each one. For ease of governance and reporting, the department's workstreams have been separated into sections, each containing information relevant to a specific Committee or Committees. The remaining content of the plan relates to the Environment Department as whole.

The Business Plan presented at Appendix A contains Section C which provides an overview of the top-level strategic workstreams of the service areas which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board, i.e. the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens. Once approved, the Business Plan will be adopted from April 2026.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2026-30; and
- ii. Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee, the elements of the Environment Department's high-level Business Plan 2026-30 (Appendix A), which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board.

Main Report

Background

1. Each year, every City of London department produces a standardised high-level Business Plan, in alignment with the corporate business planning process. In 2025, the Environment Department was one of two pathfinder departments to transition from a single-year to a multi-year Business Plan which covered 2025-30. The Plan set out the Department's priority workstreams for 2025-30 and the specific actions which would be undertaken to deliver those workstreams in 2025/26.
2. The Environment Department's Business Plan has now been reviewed and refreshed for 2026-30. The majority of the workstreams are still relevant and remain unchanged, but the actions under each workstream have been updated for 2026/27. Performance measures and targets have also been reviewed and refined where possible. The end date of the Business Plan remains 2030 to align with the duration of the Corporate Plan 2024-29.
3. The high-level Business Plan 2026-30 aligns to our Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and demonstrates how the department's work supports delivery of the Corporate Plan outcomes. It also indicates the estimated funding and people resources associated with each priority workstream. As a high-level plan, this document does not capture the granularity of departmental work but gives an overall picture of departmental activity, trends where applicable and direction of travel.
4. Detailed five-year business plans for each of the Natural Environment charities are in place alongside the high-level Business Plan; these charity business plans are approved by, and performance is reported to, the relevant Charity Management Committee.

Environment Department high-level Business Plan for 2026-30

5. This report presents, at Appendix A, the high-level Business Plan for 2026-30 for the services of the Environment Department which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board, ie:
 - The Natural Environment Division
 - City Gardens
6. The Business Plan sets out the priority workstreams for 2026-30 and the actions that will be undertaken in 2026/27 to deliver them. The Plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to detail the actions for the following year.
7. The priority workstreams are as listed below with a brief description of each one. The first three workstreams reflect the Natural Environment Strategies.
 - a) **Nature conservation and resilience (incl. climate mitigation and adaptation).**

This workstream includes a wide range of actions across all sites to protect and enhance the biodiversity and resilience of our green spaces. Delivery of the workstream directly supports the Corporate Plan outcome 'leading sustainable environment' as well as the Climate Action Strategy's Carbon Removals Project. Actions also contribute to the mitigation of the Natural Environment Cross-Divisional risks associated with extreme weather and climate change; pests and diseases; and wildlife management.
 - b) **Access and recreation**

This workstream focuses on providing welcoming and accessible open spaces which benefit public health and wellbeing, while balancing the impacts of visitor pressure with the protection and maintenance of the sites and assets for the future. It supports the Corporate Plan outcomes 'flourishing public spaces' and 'diverse engaged communities'. Actions contribute to the mitigation of risks associated with negative impacts of visitor pressure and the effects of anti-social behaviour.
 - c) **Culture, heritage and learning**

Actions within this workstream aim to provide more opportunities for children to engage in outdoor play and learning. Also to protect, enhance and promote our built heritage, landscape heritage and archaeological assets and promote them as part of our visitor and learning offers. The workstream supports several of the Corporate Plan outcomes, including 'diverse engaged communities', 'flourishing public spaces', and 'leading sustainable environment'.
 - d) **Develop a sustainable business model**

This workstream is linked to the Natural Environment Charities Review, improving financial security for the charities and ensuring compliance with charity law. Other actions include the identification and maximisation of

fundraising opportunities; and improved utilisation, maintenance and sustainability of built assets. Delivery of the workstream supports the mitigation of risks associated with uncertainty of the future funding model; budget pressures; and decline in condition of assets.

e) City Gardens: Effectively manage the green spaces within the Square Mile

Actions within this workstream will ensure the provision of well-maintained and accessible green spaces within the Square Mile which can be enjoyed by everyone. It supports the Corporate Plan outcomes 'flourishing public spaces', 'vibrant thriving destination', and 'providing excellent services'.

Prioritisation and alignment to Corporate Plan 2024-29

8. The Environment Department's priority workstreams were identified by the Department's Senior Leaders and their management teams, in consultation with other members of staff. The establishment of these core workstreams enables management teams to set appropriate objectives and action plans to achieve the overarching goals during the years ahead.
9. The workstreams were selected to reflect key strategic priorities. They demonstrate how the department supports delivery of the Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes and other cross-cutting strategies, programmes and priority projects, such as Destination City and the Climate Action Strategy, as well as the statutory duties of the services. However, due to the high-level nature of the Plan, the workstreams do not include all elements of the teams' work; there is a significant amount of 'business as usual' activity that will continue alongside the priority workstreams.

Synergies and collaboration

10. Each workstream is linked to corporate priorities. Other corporate strategies, programmes and projects are referenced throughout.
11. Colleagues are working collaboratively to identify synergies and opportunities to work together across the department and the wider organisation and continue to develop opportunities for improvement. All projects and programmes will adhere to the new corporate P3 Project Framework.
12. The front and back pages of the Plan contain information which relates to the whole of the Environment Department and these pages are being presented to all Committees along with the relevant Committee-specific workstream section.
13. As a key enabling function, the Department's Business Services Division works to align common processes and procedures to achieve consistency and effectiveness. This Division leads cross-departmentally on areas including business planning; risk management; health and safety; workforce planning; Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; communications and engagement; information and data management; and GIS mapping.

Resources utilised

14. As part of a pilot prioritisation exercise which began in 2024/25, every City Corporation department has again been required to include an estimation of the budget and people resource associated with each workstream. These figures are expressed as percentages of the overall revenue budget and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.
15. It has not been possible to determine accurate allocation of financial or people resources for each workstream; very few are discrete projects with specific budgets, and very few members of staff spend specific proportions of their time on one workstream. Therefore, the figures shown in the Business Plan are very much estimates. Should this exercise be repeated in future years, accurate methodology will need to be designed and applied to ensure consistency across and within departments.

Performance measurement

16. Progress made against priority workstreams is assessed by monitoring key performance measures and achievement of milestones. Performance is reviewed regularly by Directors and their Management Teams and is reported to the Natural Environment Board every six months to enable Member scrutiny. The Town Clerk's Executive Leadership Board also reviews the progress of every department's Business Plan workstreams and performance measures on a quarterly basis.
17. The priority workstreams identified in this high-level Business Plan are part of the 'golden thread' that flows through the charity business plans and the individual performance plans of members of staff, all of which provide further methods of assessing progress. This also enables individual officers to fully understand how their work feeds into charity, divisional, departmental and corporate activities, aims and objectives.

Departmental Operational Property Assets Utilisation Assessment

18. The Environment Department's staff are based across 25 sites throughout London and the south-east. The Department holds approximately 340 physical assets, almost 270 of which are at its Natural Environment sites.
19. As part of the Corporation's Operational Property Review Programme, the Department has undertaken a detailed utilisation assessment of all allocated operational property assets beyond Guildhall. A separate detailed utilisation assessment of accommodation allocated to the Environment Department within the Guildhall complex was undertaken over a four-week period in November 2025. The results of both exercises have been returned to the City Surveyor's Department.
20. Over the coming year, we will continue to work in partnership with the City Surveyor's Department to review, assess and progress essential repairs and maintenance to our physical assets. In addition, work will continue to produce a comprehensive departmental Asset Plan which will enable effective management and development of these assets to ensure they add value to the organisation

and the natural environment charities while being fit for purpose, well maintained, and safe for our staff and service users.

Corporate and Strategic Implications

Strategic implications - The Environment Department's high-level Business Plan is aligned to Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes. There are common themes woven throughout the Business Plan which highlight its contribution and commitment to the delivery of the Corporate Plan, Destination City, the Climate Action Strategy, the People Strategy and other key cross-cutting programmes and projects. Any new strategies will be reviewed as they are approved, and consideration given as to how the services can and will support their delivery.

Security implications - None

Financial implications - The high-level Business Plan has been produced in liaison with Chamberlain's Department and the Natural Environment Charities Review team. It takes into consideration opportunities to reduce expenditure and increase income to make necessary savings, and the need to develop a sustainable business model for the charities under the new grant-funding model.

Equalities implications and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) - The Department has an established Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) Working Group. The Group has developed a Departmental EEDI Plan which aligns with the Corporate EDI Plan. Members of the Group lead on a range of EEDI actions, including those set out in the Business Plan, to ensure compliance with the PSED across the department.

Resourcing implications - Any changes to resources will be brought to the relevant Committee(s).

Risk Implications - The risk management processes in place in the Environment Department support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, our Departmental and Divisional Business Plans and relevant Corporate strategies. Risk management is an integral factor in the business planning process, with several of the priority workstreams delivering actions which will contribute to the mitigation of risks. Risks to achieving the objectives set out in the Business Plan are identified and managed in accordance with the City of London Risk Management Framework and the requirements of the Charity Commission where relevant.

Climate Implications - The work of the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens team supports the delivery of the Corporate Climate Action Strategy through delivery of relevant workstreams; updates on progress are reported to this Board throughout the year.

Conclusion

This report presents, for consideration and approval, the high-level Business Plan for 2026-30 for the services of the Environment Department which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board. Once approved, the Plan will be updated in line with any changes requested by the Board and will be adopted in April 2026.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Environment Department high-level Business Plan 2026-30

Joanne Hill

Business Planning and Compliance Manager, Environment Department

joanne.hill@cityoflondon.gov.uk

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ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT HIGH-LEVEL BUSINESS PLAN 2026-2030

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Finance and key risks

SECTION B: Port Health and Environmental Services Committee and Licensing Committee

Priority workstreams 2026-2030 and key deliverables 2026/27

Finance and key risks

SECTION C: Natural Environment Board

Priority workstreams 2026-2030 and key deliverables 2026/27

Finance and key risks

Environment Department enablers

Executive Director's introduction

The Environment Department is the largest and most complex department in the Corporation with over 800 staff working in 25 locations, providing key front-line services to the City and beyond. The work of the department is overseen by more than eight Committees.

Over the next four years, the Department will deliver world-class places and infrastructure across the Square Mile – where it plays a key role in supporting growth and investment – as well as the many assets it manages beyond the City's boundaries.

In doing so, the Department – still relatively new in being a single Department, at four years on – will continue to build its approach to stronger, more robust management of its services, with the aim of providing a model for delivering excellent services sustainably and in a way that is more open and engaging with its service users, including City residents, workers, businesses and visitors, its partners and other stakeholders.

The Department will become an increasingly proactive and constructive corporate partner, developing a reputation for working across siloes and contributing as positively to the direction of the Corporation as to its own aims. It will continue to build its capacity to attract, retain and grow investment and business in the Square Mile and across our services.

Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment

About us: Our purpose, aims and impacts

The Environment Department *Shaping future environments and nurturing current ones.*

Our aims:

- Deliver transformative, high profile, and strategic infrastructure and public realm schemes, that will result in major economic, social and cultural benefits.
- Encourage the construction of high quality, safe and inclusive buildings.
- Provide spaces for businesses to grow, improve transport and maintain our unique historic environment.
- Create an inclusive, accessible and healthy Square Mile with clean streets and air.
- Support and advise businesses, including SMEs and licensed premises, to enable them to thrive and to protect consumers.
- Protect and promote public, animal and environmental health, including at the borders.
- Protect and enhance the Corporation's green and open spaces and celebrate local heritage.
- Address long term issues such as climate resilience to deliver sustainable built and natural environments.

Our achievements, impacts and outcomes in 2025/26

During 2025/26 our teams continued to work in collaboration with other departments, including, but not limited to, City Surveyor's; Innovation and Growth; and Remembrancers, and external partners to fulfil their statutory duties and deliver excellent services, adapting to the requirements of new and changing legislation and government demands. Progress against key workstreams and performance measures remained on track with targets consistently achieved or exceeded.

We developed and delivered strategies, policies, and actions which will have positive impacts on the environment, City residents, consumers, businesses and members of the public, including:

- Progressed the City Plan 2040 through the next stages of development.
- Implemented the Action/Delivery Plans of the SME Strategy, Circular Economy Framework, Air Quality Strategy and Transport Strategy.
- Developed the Licensing Service to introduce free pre-application meetings for residents and the trade; and reported to stakeholders on Late Night Levy spend and outcomes.
- Played a key role in delivery of Destination City, the Climate Action Strategy and other key Corporate strategies and programmes.
- Continued to implement the Natural Environment Division strategies to protect and improve our natural habitats, and ensure they are more accessible, sustainable, and preserved for public benefit.

Our key objectives and priority workstreams and major projects

Priority workstreams 2026/30

Although each of our workstreams is specific to relevant Committees, there are common themes woven throughout that highlight our contribution and commitment to the delivery of the Corporate Plan, Destination City, the Climate Action Strategy and other key strategies and programmes, whilst taking account of stakeholder views and needs.

City development and economic growth: We will seek to facilitate growth through our planning policies which aim for office development of the highest quality and ensure that the City's historic environment fully supports the City's strategic economic and cultural objectives. Officers across the department will collaborate to share knowledge and expertise which supports sustainable development.

Excellent local authority services: We will continue to provide excellent statutory and regulatory services to ensure a safe and clean built environment and public realm, and protect and promote public, animal and environmental health and consumer protection.

Climate and environment: We will provide a climate resilient and environmentally enhanced city through the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity of our open spaces; delivery of Climate Action Strategy programmes and our Air Quality Strategy; consideration of sustainability, carbon emissions and biodiversity as part of planning decisions; and the promotion of Circular Economy principles through delivery of our Circular Economy Framework.

Business support: The launch of the SME Gateway brand will aid start-up businesses and SMEs to scale and grow, helping to maintain London's position as the leading global financial and professional services centre. We will support licensed premises to thrive, while balancing their needs with those of residents and visitors, helping to deliver the Destination City vision.

Healthy and inclusive environment: The facilities and services at our open spaces will be further developed to offer welcoming places that visitors from all backgrounds and abilities are comfortable to explore. City streets will be well maintained with increased accessibility delivered through streets and spaces projects. New planning advice and guidance will be published to improve inclusivity and accessibility, and the City of London's Access Team will be reformed and expanded to increase engagement with disabled people based on lived experience.

Operational capability and interdepartmental collaboration

As we continue to develop the Department, we will maximise the advantages of our size and extensive remit: we deliver a vast range of services and have the largest workforce of all city departments, but this also means we have a vast range of skills, knowledge and expertise among our staff. We will look for synergies and opportunities to work together across the department and the wider organisation.

Our people: We will support delivery of the People Strategy and build 'Brilliant Basics'. Health and safety will be embedded in all our decisions, processes and actions, and be compliant with the Corporate Health and Safety Framework. Our EEDI activities, Workforce Plan, and focus on learning and development will help us to understand and meet the needs of our staff and enable our talent to grow. We will promote a departmental culture that ensures staff feel valued, supported through change, and respected by their managers and colleagues. By helping individuals understand how their work contributes to the aims of the wider department, and Corporation, we aim to enhance job satisfaction and staff retention.

Our corporate partners: We will continue to work collaboratively with colleagues across other departments, as intelligent clients, to break down silos and realise efficiencies. Where our workstreams will impact or require the support of other departments, we will consult them as early as possible. We will continue to work in partnership with the City Surveyor's Department to review, assess and progress essential repairs and maintenance to the approximately 340 physical assets we hold. Through production of a departmental Asset Plan, we will manage and develop these assets to ensure they add value to the charities and organisation while being fit for purpose, well maintained, and safe for our staff and service users.

Our external stakeholders: We will continue to communicate with our stakeholders appropriately and take their feedback into consideration when shaping our services. This will include consultation on new policies and strategies; planning applications; proposed changes to the public realm; and regular communications to residents, local groups and customers.

Our finances: By developing financially sustainable business models, we will ensure we consistently deliver high quality services. We will achieve this through proactive budget management, prioritisation and seeking value for money and opportunities for income generation. Across the department, we will seek ways to improve; embracing change, enhancing our use of data and adopting new ways of working and technologies that will make us more efficient and cost effective.

SECTION C: Natural Environment Board

This section covers the service areas which fall within the remit of the Natural Environment Board:

- Natural Environment Division
- City Gardens

Priority workstream and key 2026/27 deliverables	Funding / People resource approx.%*	Corporate Plan 2024-2029 Outcomes	Performance measures	Impacts
a) Nature conservation and resilience (incl. climate mitigation and adaptation).				
<p>1. Improve or create habitats and open spaces through targeted schemes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out deer management programme at Epping Forest. By Q4 2026/27 • Gain/maintain Red Tractor certification (The Commons and Epping Forest). By Q4 2026/27. • Produce annual Cattle Management Plan and Grazing Plan. By Q4 2026/27 • Meet CSS reporting deliverables and grant conditions (RPA/DEFRA). By Q4 2026/27 <p>2. Protect sites from encroachment and development impacts. Ongoing</p> <p>3. Protect animal and plant health and contribute to recovery of protected species.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain BIAZA status licence. Q4 2026/27 <p>4. Deliver the Climate Action Strategy's Carbon Removals Project to protect and enhance carbon sequestration level. 2027</p>	35% / 35%	<p>Leading Sustainable Environment</p> <p>Flourishing Public Spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites with up-to-date Management Plans. Target: 75% • Statutory designated sites assessed as 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition. Target: 75% • Response rate to Government/ LPA Planning and Policy consultations with potential for significant adverse effects on the open spaces and their ecological integrity. Target: 50% • Eligible sites enrolled in Countryside Stewardship Schemes. Target: 90% • Increase carbon sequestration. Target: additional 0.21kt per annum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity of our open spaces is protected and enhanced • Impacts from housing development and increase in visitors is managed and mitigated. • The welfare of animals (cared for and wild) is maintained and invasive species are monitored and controlled. • The Corporation will meet its target of being Carbon neutral by 2027.

* Funding allocation and people resource %s are estimates. Funding is shown as a percentage of the total Natural Environment Division and City Gardens 2026/27 revenue budget. People resource is shown as a percentage of the total FTE in the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens. Figures across the workstreams do not total 100% as much 'business as usual activity' is not captured in this high-level plan.

Priority workstream and key 2026/27 deliverables	Funding / People resource approx.%*	Corporate Plan 2024-2029 Outcomes	Performance measures	Impacts
b) Access and recreation				
<p>1. Implement comprehensive work programmes to meet statutory obligations for public access and to provide a safe and welcoming environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of accessibility statements on website(s) for all open spaces' built assets. Within 3 years <p>2. Provide and maintain compliant informal and formal recreational, sports and play for public health and wellbeing. Ongoing</p> <p>3. Plan and implement measures to mitigate the impact of visitors in sensitive areas. Deliver all SAMMs agreements (Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches).</p>	35% / 35%	<p>Flourishing public spaces</p> <p>Leading Sustainable Environment</p> <p>Diverse Engaged Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor Safety Risk Assessments (by site/compartment) completed. Target: 100% Tree safety surveys responded to within required period. Target: 100% Successful Green Flag applications. Target: 100% Repair actions raised during annual ROSPA inspections are completed within 30 days. Target: 100% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our spaces are welcoming places that visitors from all backgrounds and abilities are comfortable to explore. The public health and wellbeing is improved through use of open spaces. Our sites are managed to mitigate visitor pressure and protect the most sensitive areas.

* Funding allocation and people resource %s are estimates. Funding is shown as a percentage of the total Natural Environment Division and City Gardens 2026/27 revenue budget. People resource is shown as a percentage of the total FTE in the Natural Environment Division and City Gardens. Figures across the workstreams do not total 100% as much 'business as usual activity' is not captured in this high-level plan.

Priority workstream and key 2026/27 deliverables	Funding / People resource approx.%*	Corporate Plan 2024-2029 Outcomes	Performance measures	Impacts
c) Culture, heritage and learning				
<p>1. Protect and maintain heritage assets including landscapes, parks and gardens, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected views and archaeological sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent assets declining in condition (Heritage at Risk Register). Ongoing Input to the relevant Heritage Conservation Management Plans of CSD. Ongoing <p>2. Provide more opportunities for education and connection to nature and heritage for children and volunteers. Ongoing</p> <p>PROJECT/RESTRICTED FUNDING COMMITMENTS Explore innovative models for rehabilitation of heritage assets, initiate feasibility studies and business modelling.</p>	10% / 10%	<p>Diverse engaged communities.</p> <p>Vibrant thriving destination.</p> <p>Flourishing public spaces.</p> <p>Providing excellent services.</p> <p>Leading sustainable environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the number of assets on Heritage at Risk Register. Target: One asset Heritage assets and landscapes with a current Conservation Management Plan. Target: 70% Number of sessions (including outdoor play) delivered by Education Teams. Target: 1,080 Number of community volunteering sessions/programmes (FTE). Target: 1,628 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have strong relationships with our communities of interest resulting in their effective support for our open spaces, increased advocacy and volunteering to support the CoL and its green spaces. Our heritage assets are well protected for future generations and are visited by diverse audiences. Our heritage assets can be used to support income generation if/when restored to a state of good repair (e.g. Hill Garden Pergola).

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Priority workstream and key 2026/27 deliverables	Funding / People resource approx.%*	Corporate Plan 2024-2029 Outcomes	Performance measures	Impacts
d) Develop a sustainable business model				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement the recommendations of the Natural Environment Charities Review, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree SLAs and improved recharging settlement. • Improved utilisation of built assets and equipment. • Improved environmental performance of built assets. 2. Devise CRM requirements to efficiently manage public engagement, case management and fundraising needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement CRM. By Q4 2026/27 3. Seek opportunities to improve income generation, green finance and maximise fundraising opportunities. Ongoing 4. Complete transfer of The Monument and explore transfer of Keats House from Natural Environment Division to the newly formed Culture Team. By Q4 2026/27 	5% / 20%	Flourishing Public Spaces Vibrant Thriving Destination Dynamic Economic Growth Providing Excellent Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative updates will be provided on the performance of the actions listed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with Charity law. • Improved income generation, supporting charity objectives. • Updated governance for the charities. • Clarity of asset ownership and responsibility will enable more effective and efficient management.

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Priority workstream and key 2026/27 deliverables	Funding / People resource approx.%*	Corporate Plan 2024-2029 Outcomes	Performance measures	Impacts
e) City Gardens: Effectively manage the green spaces within the Square Mile				
<p>1. Provide well maintained and accessible spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor green spaces within the Square Mile for accessibility standards against established baseline. <p>Ongoing</p> <p>2. Develop, consult and deliver a replacement for the Biodiversity Action Plan. Q2 2026/27</p>	11% / 14%	<p>Flourishing Public Spaces</p> <p>Vibrant Thriving Destination</p> <p>Providing Excellent Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of trees planted. Target: 23 trees Area of climate resilient public realm and open space enhanced (sqm). Target: 3,450 sqm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More accessible public spaces. Everyone benefits from having access to an enhanced City environment.

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SECTION C: Natural Environment Board

Finance 2026/27

Natural Environment Division and City Gardens Estimated budget 2026/27 (£000)	
Local risk net expenditure	14,618
Central risk	(365)
City Surveyor's local risk	10,464
Recharges	5,628
Total net expenditure	30,345

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Our key risks*

Our business risks are managed in accordance with the Corporate Risk Management Framework and, where applicable, the Charities Act 2011. Risks are regularly reviewed and updated by management teams in consultation with risk owners. Committees receive regular updates on the risks held by the charities/services within their remit to provide them with necessary assurance that risks are being managed and mitigated effectively, and to enable Members to fulfil their oversight and scrutiny role.

Each of the Natural Environment charities holds its own risk register. The Natural Environment Cross-Divisional Risk Register includes risks which are managed by the Natural Environment Director at a strategic level. City Gardens is part of the City Operations Division, and its risks are held in a separate, non-charity, risk register.

The highest risks fall within the subject areas listed below.

Decline in condition of assets	Tree maintenance
Budget pressures and uncertainty	Impacts of anti-social behaviour on staff and sites
Risks to health and safety	Work related stress
Negative impacts from pests and diseases	Negative impacts of extreme climate and weather

**Risk details were correct at 28 November 2025 but are subject to continual review and change.*

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT ENABLERS

N.B. the information on this page relates to the Department as a whole.

Business Services Division

The Business Services Division enables the Department as whole to deliver its aims and objectives, by ensuring a consistent, compliant and joined-up approach. Across this large and diverse department, the teams provide a central hub of expertise, advice and guidance on themes, duties and responsibilities which are common to all, and act as a conduit between divisions and the corporate centre.

Working with management teams across the Department, and with key links throughout the organisation, the Business Services Division leads cross-departmentally on areas including business planning; risk management; health and safety; workforce planning and talent management; work environment; Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; communications and staff engagement; information and data management; and Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping.

Vital to its success is the development of strong, reciprocal working relationships between officers within the Division and their colleagues across the Department and wider Corporation. Officers work collaboratively to build a cohesive department with a unified identity, and which recognises and celebrates the achievements of individuals and teams.

Corporate Risks and Red Departmental Risks

Due to the size and wide remit of the Environment Department, the majority of its operational risks are specific to individual divisions and reported regularly to their respective Service Committees. Those risks are managed at service-level and the key ones are reported in the relevant Committee's section of this Business Plan.

The Environment Department currently holds NO Corporate Risks.

The Department's Senior Leadership Team manages four Departmental-level risks, of which one is scored 'Red' (as below).

Risk Title	Score
ENV-SLT 001 Maintenance and renewal of physical assets	16

Operational Property

To fulfil the requirements of Standing Order 56, the Environment Department has undertaken a detailed utilisation assessment of all allocated operational property assets beyond the Guildhall.

A separate detailed utilisation assessment of accommodation allocated to the Environment Department within the Guildhall complex was undertaken over a four-week period in November 2025.

The results of both exercises have been returned to the City Surveyor's Department.

People

(Data correct at 30 November 2025)

The Environment Department has 832 members of staff (785 FTE), this represents an 8.3% increase over the last 12 months.

Average length of service: 10 years (corporation-wide average: 8 years)

Median age: 45 years (corporation wide average: 44 years)



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Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI)

- The Environment Department is committed to creating an environment of collaboration and equality of opportunity where everyone recognises the positive contribution a diverse workforce and community can make.
- The Department is committed to EEDI in our service provision and for all our employees. Creating a workplace aligned to these values is a strategic business priority that fosters fair and equal access, innovation and connection to the communities and stakeholders we serve.
- The Department has an EEDI Working Group which consists of representatives (Champions) from across the department and is chaired by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Working with the SLT, the group is responsible for developing and implementing the Departmental EEDI Action Plan.
- Our Departmental EEDI Action Plan 2025/26 was launched in July 2025 and aligns with the CoL's Corporate Equality Objectives. Progress will continue to be regularly monitored.
- The EEDI Working Group is collaborating with the corporate EEDI team, other departments, and staff networks, on key EEDI priorities including, but not limited to, Gender Identity, accessibility, and social mobility. Appropriate actions and progress against these are reflected in our 2025/26 Departmental Action Plan.

The top three priorities of our Departmental EEDI Action Plan 2025/26 are to:

1. Continue to build on our action plan to further develop an inclusive culture, including making cross-departmental working groups fully inclusive; aligning representatives' objectives with individual appraisals; and ensuring EEDI remains a standing agenda item at departmental meetings, led from the top down. We will continue to promote and celebrate inclusivity and diversity through departmental events, employee communications, and engagement activities, while also maintaining robust monitoring of corporate EEDI training completions and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) to track progress and accountability.
2. Undertake a comprehensive review of our services, communications, and support mechanisms for staff and stakeholders considering the recent Supreme Court ruling on Gender Identity. Collaborate closely with the Corporate EEDI Team, departmental leads, and staff networks through the Gender Identity (GI) Working Group and GI Policy Working Group, as well as through related workstreams, to ensure our approach remains inclusive, compliant, and reflective of best practice.
3. Ensure that our services are accessible for all. We will achieve this by undertaking a review of our functions, services, and facilities in terms of accessibility; undertaking EQIAs with results taken into consideration when making decisions on service delivery; and hosting quarterly accessibility workshops for employees to develop their knowledge and understanding on how to produce information and communications in accessible formats.

Health and Safety

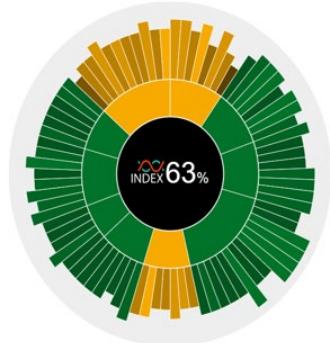
Following the implementation of Safe365 in July 2024, we have taken a range of actions which have increased the departmental maturity rating from 56% to 63%. Several of our business areas currently exceed the Executive Leadership Board's target of 65% and work is ongoing to achieve that across the whole department.

The exercise has identified opportunities to improve Health and Safety within the department, with a refreshed focus on our Natural Environment colleagues and working environments. This approach supports the mitigation of the Health and Safety risks held by our divisions and charities.

Managers across the department are undertaking Health and Safety training in accordance with corporate recommendations, and this is supported by further specialised training for our higher risk working environments.

Our top three health and safety priorities for 2026/27 are:

- Front line worker safety.
- Development of a departmental Health and Safety audit and verification system.
- Provision of targeted guidance and relevant bite-sized training sessions to our staff.



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Agenda Item 12

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